

Week Ending Friday, June 6, 2003

Message on the Great American Cleanup, 2003

May 30, 2003

I send greetings to the participants of the 2003 Great American Cleanup. I am honored to serve as Honorary Chair of this event. America is a land of majestic beauty, and Americans can be proud of the remarkable progress we have made in protecting our environment and natural resources. Today, our air is cleaner, our waters are less polluted, and our lands are better protected, better managed, and more accessible to the American people. Through volunteer service programs such as the Great American Cleanup, we continue to preserve our natural heritage for future generations and make our communities more vibrant places to visit and live.

I have called on every American to dedicate at least 4,000 hours over the rest of their lives to the service of others. Through the USA Freedom Corps initiative, my Administration is mobilizing individuals and organizations and providing opportunities for citizens to give back to their communities. Americans have responded with an outpouring of acts of kindness and volunteer service that is transforming our Nation, one heart and one soul at a time.

I commend those involved with the Great American Cleanup for answering the call to serve. I also applaud Keep America Beautiful for 50 years of encouraging Americans to take responsibility for improving the environment.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Interview With RTR TV of Russia

May 29, 2003

Strength of the Dollar

Q. Let me start with the people's question. In my country, for many people, America is associated first and foremost with the U.S. dollar. You bring the muscle. What's going on? Is it going to stay as weak as it is now? And what's your forecast?

The President. The policy of my administration is for there to be a strong U.S. dollar.

Q. Which is not at the moment.

The President. Well, I understand that. And the marketplace is making decisions as to whether the dollar should be strong or not. Our policy is a strong dollar. And we believe that good fiscal and monetary policy will cause our economy to grow and that the marketplace will see a growing economy and therefore strengthen the dollar.

But you're right, the market, at this point in time, has devalued the dollar, which is contrary to our policy.

Q. You're not going to launch a separate dollar for the vendor states and a separate dollar internationally, because there was a rumor like that. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, forget that. No, we're not going to do that.

Speculation on the War on Terror

Q. Tell me about rumors. Is there any seriousness behind today's press reports that America's next target is Iran and that your Armed Forces are going to use bases in the former Soviet republics Azerbaijan and Armenia?

The President. We've had all kinds of reports that we're going to use force in Syria. And now some on the left, I guess, are saying force in Iran or force here and force there. You know, it's pure speculation. And we used

force in Iraq after a long, long period of diplomacy. Remember, I was a person that went to the United Nations on September the 12th in 2002 and said, "Let's work together." And we got a resolution out of the United Nations.

Q. The 1441.

The President. Fourteen-forty-one. Then we tried to get a second resolution, which obviously was a stalemate. We never had a vote. And then—but the point was, is that I tried everything we could do diplomatically to bring about a common solution in dealing with Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction.

And so, you know, people love to speculate about U.S. intentions and our military. And I'm just telling you it's idle speculation.

Iraq

Q. Coming back to the U.S. role, now that the war in Iraq is over, there is still a new twist in this discussion about America's role, a natural leader or a self-proclaimed leader which enforces its——

The President. A natural leader.

Q. Natural leader.

The President. Emerging in Iraq, you're talking about the leadership of Iraq? Yes, the Iraqi people are plenty capable of picking their own leadership. There's a lot of work to do to create the conditions necessary for a smooth political process.

And the first thing is to improve the lives of the Iraqi people. I mean, make sure they've got food and electricity and water and sewer. And in many parts of the country, life is improving. Baghdad is difficult. Baghdad—the security is tough in Baghdad because——

Q. Did you expect anything like that?

The President. Sure. I mean, this is a country that had been enslaved for years by Saddam Hussein. And as we're discovering through the mass graves all around the countryside, he used torture and killing to stay in power. And therefore, it's not surprising that after—I forget how many days we've been there, 70 or 80 days—that democracy hasn't sprung forth yet. It's going to take a while to improve conditions, and it's going to take a while to take care of the security

issues within Baghdad. But life is improving, and that's what's important.

President's Upcoming Visit to Russia

Q. Now that you're going to Russia, last time, I remember, when you were planning your first trip you read Dostoyevsky. Now you read Dostoyevsky, you've dealt with Mr. Putin, what are your expectations now? Are you going to try anything in Russia, in the sense of a new political initiative or maybe taste something new?

The President. Well, I tell you, I think—first of all, I'm looking forward to going to St. Petersburg for my third time since I've been the President. It's a fantastic city. And Vladimir kindly invited Laura and me to go to the 300th anniversary of the city, and we're looking forward to it.

I think the most important thing that will come out the meetings with Vladimir Putin is the world will see that even though we had some disagreement on Iraq, that we're willing to continue to work together for the good of our respective countries as well as world peace.

Secondly, there will be a strategic—a formal strategic dialog established, not only between Vladimir and me but throughout our bureaucracies, our different agencies, so that the Russian people and the American people know that we're working in concert to work on common opportunities as well as to deal with problems before they become acute.

President's View of Russia

Q. Now that you've dealt with Putin, read Dostoyevsky, have been to St. Petersburg three times, do you think you understand Russia better than you did in the past, or what's your notion?

The President. Well, first of all, Russia is a fantastic country with a great history. And I'm learning—I'm understanding the Russian mentality a little better. I will certainly not be an expert. I fortunately do have experts on my staff, starting with Condoleezza Rice, who has lived in Russia, studied Russia, understands Russia well.

My main focus has been to deal with Vladimir Putin leader to leader. Because I firmly believe that if we can establish trust between each other, then we can see to it that others

in our administration begin to trust each other more. And trust is an important concept.

I never forget my first question I was asked, after having met Vladimir Putin in Slovenia, was from an enterprising U.S. reporter. He said, "Do you trust Vladimir Putin?" And I, without hesitating, said, "Yes." And he said, "How do you know?" I said, "I looked in his eyes and saw his soul."

We had just come from a very long conversation where we talked about family matters and we talked about our own personal lives. And I found in Vladimir a very genuine person, somebody with whom I could place my trust. And that doesn't mean we agree on every issue, don't get me wrong. But it does mean that we have the platform necessary to have good, positive relations so we can move our relations throughout our Government forward.

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much, indeed. Have a nice trip to Russia.

The President. I'm looking forward to it.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:36 p.m. on May 29 in the Library at the White House for later broadcast and was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until 1:30 p.m., May 31. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Proclamation 7683—National Child's Day, 2003

May 30, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On National Child's Day, we celebrate the future of our Nation and the promise of America's youth. As a Nation, as parents, and as community members, we have a responsibility to build a secure and nurturing society so that our children have the opportunity to grow, learn, work, and succeed.

Creating an environment that instills important values, builds strong character, and provides sound education for our children is a vital national priority. With a firm founda-

tion, children will be better able to face the challenges of the future.

Parents are a child's first teachers, and they can be the most effective instructors. One of the most helpful activities parents can do with their children is read with them. Children who develop a love for reading expand their imaginations and cultivate a thirst for learning that lasts a lifetime. By talking, listening, and reading to our children, we can help them build the confidence they need to succeed in life. Parents' role as educators becomes even more important as schools across the country prepare for summer recess. Summertime is not only a time for children to relax and play, it is also a time for parents to strengthen their ties to their children by spending time with them and helping them to broaden their experiences.

To expand on the important work that parents do, my Administration has taken significant steps to help give our children greater opportunities to learn. By improving our education system and encouraging early reading and language skills, we give our children the tools they will need to succeed in the world they will inherit from us. Children also benefit from the immeasurable care and support of their teachers, and are inspired by the model they set.

Outside the home and the classroom, there are many adults who touch children's lives. Family, mentors, neighbors, and friends can help mold America's next generation through their positive examples, showing children how to help those in need and encouraging them to set high standards for themselves. To help instill the value of volunteer service, the USA Freedom Corps, through the Students in Service to America initiative, is helping to create ways for young people to give back to their communities. By using their time, talents, and compassion to make a difference in the lives of others, America's children are learning to become responsible and engaged leaders in our democratic society.

On this special day, we celebrate the possibility of every boy and girl in America. In their faces, we see the hope of our Nation. America is dedicated to their welfare and the full development of their potential.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,
President of the United States of America,